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AN  
ILLUSTRATION  
OF  
SOME DIFFICULT PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE,  
ON THE DOCTRINE OF  
Absolute Predestination :  
ATTEMPTED IN A  
SERMON.

*Published by request of many hearers.*

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BY WILLIAM WOODBRIDGE, A. M.

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○ house of Israel ! are not *my* ways equal ? Are not  
*your* ways unequal ?

Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions ; *so iniquity shall not be your ruin.* For, I have *no pleasure* in the death of him that dieth, saith the LORD GOD ; *wherefore turn and live ye.* Ezek. xviii. 29, 32.

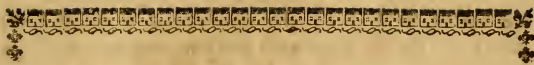
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22





## A Sermon.

*Ephesians i. 11th.*

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, BEING PREDESTINATED ACCORDING TO THE PURPOSE OF HIM WHO WORKETH ALL THINGS AFTER THE COUNSEL OF HIS OWN WILL.

**G**OD, the Creator, gives and continues the powers of natural and moral action to his creatures.

In his providential government of the natural and moral world, some actions and events are ordered and executed by his immediate influence ; some take place according to the established laws of nature ; and some are *suffered*---that is, *are not prevented*. All actions and events under the providential government of the world are, in this scripture sense of the words, ascribed to the divine agency : so the Lord smote the first born of Egypt, took away the substance of Job, suffered the demons to enter into the swine, and all nations to walk in their own ways.

God, *the only wise, cannot err* : God, the impartial Judge of all the earth, *must, from necessity, do right*. Far from our thought, therefore, be every idea of arbitrary sovereignty exercised by despotic men, when we consider the government of the all-perfect God, working all things after the counsel of his own will. To be misled, or to mislead others, on this subject is awfully hazardous. We tread on holy ground.---Let us not weakly, nor wickedly represent the agency



of the Most High equally concerned in moral good and evil ; for the scriptures clearly point out the sense in which we ought to say of actions and events, "*The Lord hath done it.*"

By the words of our text we are led to consider all things in the *creation, government and redemption* of the world *so ordered, and directed--so suffered and executed, in exact conformity to the plan, finished in the divine mind before the foundation of the world.*

*This plan in our text is called the counsel of God's own will ; and all the events of time, with their consequences in eternity, are but the effects of their cause, the eternal counsel of God so to direct, or not prevent them.*

Some introductory remarks may be very useful and proper before we attempt any illustration of our subject.

1. The counsel of God, and his judgments, to man who is of yesterday and knoweth *comprehensively* and comparatively nothing, *are a mighty and unfathomable deep.* If the properties of the smallest vegetable seed, or even an atom cannot be perfectly known by the greatest philosopher, how must a plan, comprising numberless beings, and *the infinite variety of things---*a plan wide as the universe, and endless as eternity---surpass all finite understanding !

2. *We can know* nothing more of this plan than God is pleased to manifest by the word of prophecy, and the works of providence. "Who hath been his counsellor ?"

3. Time, without origin or end, can be comprehended only by *the high and lofty ONE that inhabiteth eternity.* To God, therefore, all things are manifest at *one single view.* The events before time, in time and through all future eternity, are foreseen by the Omniscient God. "He knoweth the end from the beginning,"



4. In that infinite mind, which views at once all past, all present, and all possible things, there can be neither memory nor deliberation.

The wisdom of man then, cannot determine that foreknowledge *is not the cause* of the counsel of God. *Let not* men dare to "darken this counsel by words without knowledge."

5. The scriptures teach us, that whenever any event is determined in the divine counsels, the *causes and means, the conditions and consequences are also determined.*

The connection is inseparable, and promises and threatnings, are *conditionally* made. David in Keilah---Saul whom God "would have established in his kingdom"---Hezekiah---and Paul with his shipwrecked companions, who were to be preserved and could not be saved unless all remained in the ship, are witnesses of this.

6. The plan, or counsel of God's own will, is *one.* ---The *object* of that plan is *one*; viz. the Creator's glory, which is the creation's holiness and consequent happiness. Obedience brings glory to God in the highest---peace on earth, and good will to men.

The counsel of God, therefore, *cannot be inconsistent, nor counteract itself.*

7. On such a subject we ought to speak and hear with holy caution---never attempting to be wise above what is written---never daring "to darken counsel by words without knowledge."

*Mindful of these remarks* we will proceed to some illustration and useful improvement of our subject. We will endeavor to answer objections---use the form of sound words, and appeal to the law and the testimony---*disclaiming every sentiment contrary to the tenor of scripture---and to the doctrine of salvation by regenerating grace, through sanctification and the belief of the truth.*

I. *All things were created according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*

Our knowledge of the original state of the world, and of men, must be derived from reason---from the world as we find it---and from revelation.

*Reason* teaches us that a God, benevolent and wise, creating a world to be inhabited by men who were made to be happy as the offspring of God, would be made entirely good, without any mixture of evil. So mankind in all ages have believed that God made man, and the world, for his use of instruction and trial. In proof of this, we find the poets, and historians of every age and nation celebrating the virtues and happiness of the golden age. Equally have they lamented the vices, and miseries of succeeding ages, each of which grew more vicious than the former.

The knowledge and experience of men unite to prove the present state of the world very different from what reason and revelation declare it *was*. All parts of the natural world exhibit evident marks of a better state, and universal disorder, arising from some ruinous cause.

Thunders rend the heavens---earthquakes rock the world. The atmosphere is infected with pestilence and agitated by destructive storms---the earth produces the thistle and vegetable poisons in spontaneous and vast profusion ; while the precious harvest is often blasted---*no good* is attainable without toil---*no enjoyment* without its attendant or consequent pain---*no point of rest* or security is left for man---the animal world is hostile and ever plundering his stores---enmity and war reign universal in the animal, the human, and the *christian* world.

“ But it was not so in the beginning.”

Revelation declares that the Creator surveyed his works and pronounced them good---and very good---in their separate parts, and compleat, connected whole.

Is man, then, *as we find him*, the offspring of God ? and is *this* the world once made perfectly good and put under man's dominion ?

This is, indeed, the world, though changed from paradise to a region of misery and death---*We are, indeed, his offspring, though deplorably fallen !*

But, whence these changes ? and this awful reverse ? Revelation answers, "By one man sin entered into the world ; and *death by sin.*"

The whole creation groaneth to be delivered from the curse and consequent miseries of sin.

Is not the counsel of God, frustrated and his will counteracted ? I answer, God's command is broken ; but his plan not disconcerted ; for when he promised life to obedience, he was prepared to bestow it---when he threatened death to rebellion, he was prepared to inflict it.

On the rebellion of man the nature of things and animals was changed. "Cursted is the ground *for thy sake* : thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee."

St. Peter mentions "natural brute beasts *made to be taken and destroyed,*" which was no part of the original plan when every green thing was for *their* meat, and for the sustenance of man. Under this class we may rank all noxious and poisonous animals, too vile to be named, but well calculated to humble the living apostate, and devour this vile body of sin when dead. The serpent was filled with enmity, and envenomed with poison ; which shall cease when all men shall know and obey their God. See Isaiah xi.

The objector may here say---If this apostacy took place after the counsel of God's own will, it *could not* have been otherwise. It was by *necessity*---who hath resisted his will ?---*Almighty power might have prevented the fall.*

In answer to this we say---It was, indeed, the divine will, *not to prevent* the fall : but it was *direct rebellion to transgress the command.*

Can the power of God counteract his wisdom, truth and justice ? Or *controul the will left free* by his determinate counsel ?---Again---Did God, with

whom guile is *impossible*, delude Adam with a promise of life on condition of *impossible* obedience? Or did the Almighty forbid *unavoidable* transgression on penalty of a death eternal? Let conscience draw the conclusion, and declare the answer.

II. *In the providential, and moral government of the world, all things are ordered, executed, and suffered according to the purpose of God, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*

The *inanimate* parts of the world are senseless, and subjects of no other government than absolute control. Certain laws, therefore, uniform in every place and age, regulate all the movements of the material and vegetable world. These laws are suspended at the Creator's will: so rain incessant shall fall for forty days to drown a guilty world, but be suspended for years to punish Israel with famine. Fire in the furnace seventimes heated shall not singe the holy captives of Babylon, though it slew their executioners.

There is a *government of the animal world suited to the animal understanding* granted to most creatures, but denied to the Ostrich "which God hath deprived of wisdom." Job, xxxix. 16, 17.

The general laws of animated nature are under divine control also; for the same lions destroyed the accusers of Daniel, but not that holy man.

Neither the *inanimate* or *animal world can be the subjects of moral government.*

*The moral government of the rational world* is administered upon different principles; and suited to the rational nature and immortal existence of man.

The inspiration of the Almighty hath given him understanding, and freedom of will: therefore, he is made accountable for his moral conduct.

The consequences of his choice and works are everlasting; and serious beyond expression. Human virtue is an act and habitual choice of holiness; and to the holy character God hath promised the gift

of eternal life. Man's sin is also an act and habitual choice of vice ; and the wages of this *voluntary contract* are death eternal.---If men finally lie down in sorrow and everlasting burnings, the fire unquenchable arises from *sparks of their own kindling*.

If the blackness of darkness be the final portion of sinful men, it is the consequence of their hatred to the light that discovers and reproves their sin.

“ O ! Israel, *thou hast destroyed thyself !* ”

Opportunities to gain wisdom and practical holiness, with time to improve them, are given to every man. “ God shall judge the righteous and the wicked ; for there is a time for every purpose, and for every work.”

Of the appointed day of judgment “ he hath given assurance to *all men*.” The heathen shew the work of the law written on their heart ; their conscience also bearing witness. “ As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law ; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law ; in the day when God shall render to every man according to the deeds he hath done in the body. Those to whom God hath spoken in these last days by his Son, shall be judged by his gospel.” Thus we find numerous and clear declarations of the counsel of God's own will in his moral government of the heathen, jewish and christian world, in the dispensation of the means of grace and trial in this world ; and the rewards and punishments of eternity.

The question may here arise---Are men, by this freedom of choice made independent of God ?

They *are not*---*they cannot* be so ; for in God they live and move and have their being.

The exercise of all their powers of natural and moral action are absolutely, and every moment, dependent on their Maker. Nebuchadnezzar's understanding, and Ahithophel's counsel may be taken away---Jeroboam's hand be withered---Zechariah



be dumb---The Assyrians blind at God's sovereign pleasure. "A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps." "Surely the wrath of man ---freely acting out his rebellious heart --shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

When the wicked are to be punished, or the righteous chastised, nothing more is necessary for the prompt execution of this, than to take off restraints, and let loose the legion of demons with their human accomplices. Even the lying spirit bows to the Lord to obtain leave to deceive the prophets of Ahab? and Satan with his legion pray that they may enter the swine. Absalom is eager for intrigue and paricide.

In the awful event of the Saviour's crucifixion he was delivered into the hands of men and the powers of darkness.

The *unrestrained malice* of Satan put it into the heart of Judas to betray the Lord---Judas "instigated by the Devil," sold his blood---the priests bought it---the Jews said "his blood be on us, and our children, and crucified *Jesus* their God and King.

All these *volunteers* in their *chosen* and infernal work were left unrestrained---their driving is like that of Jehu executing vengeance in Jezreel.

That there was a necessity that Messiah should be cut off for the sins of the people, is clear; for "without the shedding of this blood there could be no remission of sin:" but, that *necessity* was laid upon men to do this with *wicked hands* cannot be admitted; for it would cancel their guilt. The mariner neither raises nor controls the wind that wafts his ship---he drives not the tide that floats his merchandize. Tides take their course; winds blow as they will; while the mariner and the merchant *use them for their purposes of trade*. So men act freely; they choose the course of action: God leaves them to pursue their course, and for wise purposes delivers men into their hands for correction or merited destruction.

Of Job, God said to Satan, *all that he hath is in thine hand* : and *Jefus was*, as he foretold, according to the determinate counfel of God, *delivered into the hands of men to be fcourged and crucified*.

In the hour of agony the Saviour said, " This is your hour, and the power of darknefs." Luke xxii.

53.

III. *In the difpenfation of the means of grace, here and the gifts of eternal life hereafter, God worketh all things after the counfel of his own will.*

What that counfel is, the word and the providence of God manifefly declare.

1. The eternal covenant of redemption was made with the Son that he fhould become man---be obedient unto death---make his foul an offering for fin---be raifed from the dead and exalted to the right hand of majefty on high.-- That he fhould fee of the travail of his foul---be fatisfied in bringing many fons to glory---that his kingdom fhould be univerfal and everlafting. At his refurrection, accordingly, "*all power* in heaven and earth was given unto him." When the faithful and true witnefs revealed to John the things which fhould be hereafter, he faw "a multitude which no man could number, of *all nations*, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" afcribing their falvation to God and the Lamb. Rev. vii. 9.

2. It is the declared counfel of God in his word, and fulfilled in his providence, that his laws, with their rewards and punifhments, fhould be fo clearly made known to all men, as to leave even the heathen without excuse, when they know God, by his works, and glorify him not as God. Rom. i. 21. That his ftatutes in the *written law* fhould be made known unto Jacob, and his testimonies unto Ifrael.

That, in the latter ages of the world, grace and truth, with fuperior fplendor, fhould come by Jefus Chrift ; and that life and immortality fhould be brought to light by the Gospel.



3. It is the counsel of God, declared in his word and fulfilled in his providence---that prosperity and adversity shall be set before men, in this their state of trial and moral discipline. We find, accordingly, the threads of sorrow, toil and suffering interwoven with all the days of man's vain life which he spendeth as a shadow. The ground is accursed for his sin---he is of few days and full of trouble. Yet the tender mercies of a long suffering God, who does not *willingly* afflict and grieve the children of men, are witnessed by all living.

Precious promises allure him to piety and heaven, -- while a host of troubles and terrors urge his trembling soul to an almighty Saviour.

4. It is the declared counsel of God, that his good spirit shall strive with men in this course of discipline; but not always, for he will withdraw after long resistance.

The charge of Stephen against Israel may be applied to all incorrigible sinners---“Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.” God has promised the holy spirit to them that ask him---The water of life shall be given freely to the thirsty; the bread of life to the hungry.

To all who seek by *patient continuance in well doing*, God will render glory, honor and eternal life.

This proclamation is made unto all men without any exception---Their sins when confessed and forsaken, shall be no bar in the way of their happiness or God's boundless mercy. Whosoever cometh to the Saviour shall in no wise be cast out. All these promises are made in the language of truth---repeated with precept upon precept, so clear and indisputable, that no man of common information, rational and honest, can either misunderstand or deny.

5. That God in the dispensation of justice, is no respecter of persons---long suffering---is slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and mercy, not choosing that any should perish, but that all should come

to the knowledge of the truth and be saved.---That he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn and live: yet he will by no means clear the guilty.

To the truth of this, the Almighty has sworn by his own eternal existence, in the prophet Ezekiel "As I live saith the Lord."---The scriptures cannot be broken; sooner shall heaven and earth, and all creation return to nothing; than one iota pass from the law.

But, is it not said---He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy? It is indeed so written; and blessed be God for this only foundation of hope. *Mercy is unmerited favor to the guilty.* No injustice or partiality is shewn when that mercy is equally, and on the condition of acceptance, offered in the gospel, to every creature. The ground of condemnation is this---light hath come into the world; but they will not come into that light.---It is a faithful saving and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; and to those who reject him, he saith, "*Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life.*"

6. It is the declared counsel of God---that from eternity he hath known and chosen the godly for himself---that they are the elect according to the fore-knowledge of God, chosen to salvation in Christ Jesus---through sanctification of the spirit, and the belief of the truth. Rom. vii. 9. 10. 2 Thes. ii. 13. We have before stated, that as there can be neither memory of the past, nor deliberation in the divine mind; so there may be no difference between decree and fore-knowledge. The unerring spirit directed the Apostle to place *every part of this bright chain of electing love, and salvation* in its proper place. Whom he did fore-know, &c. Rom. viii. 29, 30.

7. It is the declared counsel of God, that he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world, by the Son of man whom he hath ordained. In this

final decision, that every man, without respect of persons, shall be judged according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or evil. That this judgment, like fire, shall try every man's work what it is--That the judge will render to every man according to his deeds--to them who by patient continuance in well doing have sought salvation, he will render eternal life ; but to them that obey not the truth, he will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil.

3. It is the declared counsel of God--that the different degrees of guilt and goodness, in the works of men, shall determine the different degrees of final punishment and reward.

For this purpose the books shall be opened, and the subjects of each dispensation of the knowledge and the means of salvation be accordingly judged out of those things which are written in the books.

They who are without law shall be judged without law--they who are under the law shall be judged by the law--and they who are under the gospel shall be judged by the gospel.

Where much is given, much will be required. The heathens, who do by the light of nature, the things contained in the law, shall rise up in judgment, and condemn those who would not come to the light. It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for Bethsaida and Capernaum.

Nothing can be more clear, according to the scriptures, than this, viz. that the habitual temper of the mind, manifested by words and deeds, under the dispensation of knowledge more or less clearly declaring the will of God, must determine the degrees of guilt or holiness, and consequent punishment or reward in every one's final doom.---"*Are not my ways equal, saith the Lord ? Are not your ways unequal ?*"

Men who complain that these ways of God are not equal, and men of honest inquiry, may ask the following questions, and raise the following objections

to the doctrine advanced in the foregoing discourse.

Q. 1. Is not God partial and a respecter of persons, in giving some individuals, and some nations and ages of the world more light than others?

Answer. Men call their gifts their own, though all they have belongs to God. Will they complain when God, with infinitely better right and supreme wisdom, dispenses the blessings of his *mercy to the guilty*? Light enough, if well improved, is given to every man. More light to those who misimprove what they have, can not rationally promise any thing but increased guilt. *When all have a sufficiency, none can justly complain of God, whose ways are equal.* Divine gifts are dispensed with infinite wisdom by him who seeth not as man seeth, nor judgeth according to outward appearance.

Q. 2. Do not men who use the means of grace with diligence, fail of the grace of God, while others among the abandoned become the subjects of his special favor?

Answer. God is the rewarder of those that diligently seek him.

I can produce no instance from scripture, nor do I believe any one can be found in the experience of mankind, wherein God did not draw nigh to those that draw nigh to him: Nor yet wherein light and grace were refused to him who renounced sin, and sought salvation *from sin*.

Objection 3. But no man can come unto the Saviour except the Father draw him? Why doth he yet find fault?

Answer. *Men are drawn*---and by the abundant long suffering and mercies of God. Knowest thou not, O man, that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? Rewards, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and eternal, are freely offered, with all needed grace, to encourage the sinner, and allure him to holiness. “The tender mercies of God are

over all his works, and the earth is full of his goodness."

But *thou treasurest up unto thyself* wrath against the day of wrath.

Objection 4. But these offers do not appear to be made in sincerity; since the scripture declares it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth but of God that sheweth mercy. It is the determination of God not to shew that mercy; and so it is his will that they should perish.

Answer. Nay---but O man! who art thou that repliest *in contradiction against God*?--The gospel and the Prophets shall answer thee. The Lord is not willing that any should perish; but that all should come to repentance. 2 Pet. iii. 9. 1 Tim. ii. 4. Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

The scriptures, written to direct the millions of plain men, must be written in the language of plain sincerity, and unequivocal truth. It is impossible for God to lye. Take heed to thyself, and to thy safety. The ground whereon thou standest is holy. One step farther might be blasphemous, and unpardonable guilt.

When Jacob obtained the birthright blessing, it was not given to Esau, who *ran for the venison*; nor was it given according to the *will of Isaac*.---I know not by what authority this passage was ever applied to earnest seekers of salvation.

Objection 5. But the scripture saith. God creates men for eternal destruction, making vessels of eternal wrath and mercy; just as the potter makes his vessels of the same clay, some for honor, and some for dishonor. Can clay resist Omnipotence?

Answer. And *dare any man seriously say this*, because God said to Jeremiah go down to the potter's house, and say to the *notion of Israel* "Are ye not, O! house of Israel, in my hand, as clay in the hand of the potter? Cannot I do with you as this potter?"



This refers to national dependance, and guilt, which must be punished with national calamities on earth, for nations exist not in eternity. Will any assert this because God said of Pharaoh "For this purpose have I raised thee up"---*that is, to be a king, that I might manifest my power on earth?* The eternal misery of Pharaoh, in eternity where nations are no more, would not manifest God's power on earth; therefore, his *eternal destruction* could not be here intended, as the subject of the divine will and counsel.

Objection. 6. But the souls of men, even before they are born, and have done good or evil, are the objects of divine hatred, that the purpose of God according to election (and reprobation) might stand; for it is written, Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated, that is, predestinated to eternal death.

Answer. How readest thou, O! Objector? Understandest thou what thou readest? --My bible tells me no such thing. It is not possible that God, the father of the spirit, who is no respecter of persons, and judgeth every man according to his works, should so hate the works of his hand. Turn to those passages, read them again and again. It is not said, Jacob have I *loved* and Esau have I *hated before they were born*. *This was said* thirteen hundred years after their death, in the prophet Malachi, concerning the nation *Israel*, whom God had eminently prospered---and the nation *Edom*, or Esau, whose heritage God had, in his just anger for their national sins, "laid waste for the dragons of the wilderness." *This is said*, before the children were born; "That the elder should serve the younger." Compare this quotation of the Apostle with Gen. xx. 23. describing two nations and of different characters---two manner of people, and the elder people shall serve the younger people, which was fulfilled eight hundred years after, when David put garrisons in Edom, and subjected them to tribute. The scriptures are the best and only interpreter of themselves.

Objection. 7. But God hath made all things for himself; and even the wicked for the day of evil; that is, of eternal destruction. Prov. xvi. 4.

Answer. God, who in his wise providence maketh the rich and the poor, the honorable and dishonorable *in this world*, maketh the tabernacles of the wicked to prosper, and aids the impious to raise themselves to the throne of power, to prepare them for the signal monuments of his justice in the day of evil, that is, *the day of calamity and temporal destruction*.

Objection. 8. But still there are difficulties attending this plan of understanding the scriptures?

Answer. There may be more and greater difficulties upon any other plan. While we know but in part, and see through a glass darkly, we must expect to meet with difficulties. Great is the mystery of godliness.

The misimprovements, and proper improvements of our subject now remain. Men often misimprove this subject, as follows :

1. All things future are determined after the counsel of his will. He is of one mind, and none can turn him. Prayer then is of no avail.

We answer, God is of one mind, and *that mind* is declared. He that seeketh shall find. Ask and thou shalt receive. It is therefore unchangeably decreed, that he that seeketh, in the appointed way shall find. God is "the prayer hearing God," therefore, it is the unalterable appointment of God to answer prayer. The prayer of the righteous is foreseen, and an answer provided, before it is offered, as in the instance of Hezekiah against Sennacherib.

2. If I am to be saved, I shall be saved;--- if I am to be lost, I shall be lost, let me do what I will. I may live as I choose. It will make no difference.

Answer. You may live as you choose, for God hath set obedience and life, disobedience and death



before you ; and by his determinate counsel left you to the freedom of your own will. *But what you do will make an infinite and everlasting difference in your future estate.*

If you are chosen to salvation hereafter, it is because you will choose holiness here, and seek eternal life by the patient continuance in well doing. If the end be decreed, the means of sanctification through the belief of the truth are also decreed. If you are predestinated to eternal death, it is not because God desires your destruction--it is not because you are sinners ; but, because you will not confess and forsake your sins. It is not because you are in ignorance and darkness ; but because you will not come to the light that your deeds may be reprov'd, confessed and forsaken. *The counsel of God connects the character, means, and end, inseparably together.*

3. All things are known to God : consequently my future estate, whether I am to be saved or lost, is known to him ; and what he knoweth must take place. Nothing I can say or do will make any alteration.

Answer. All things are indeed and must be known to God. But *how* are they known ? They are known as the consequences of your own choice and conduct. Whether you will go on in spiritual sloth, complaining of your hard fate, till the light of eternity shall flash conviction and horror into your understanding, we know not. Whether you will grieve and resist the spirit till he will strive no more, man cannot tell, but God knoweth. God also knoweth whether you and your families are to live, and be fed and warmed through the severities of the coming winter. And what God knoweth will come to pass.

Why did you plant your fields, and sow your wheat and barley ? Why prepare your wool and your flax--your dwelling and your fuel ? Why ? For

this best of reasons, we know that if God knoweth that we are to live in health and comfort, it is in the use of means. He is an idiot or a madman, who thinks, or who acts otherwise. Are the folly and distraction of neglect in the affair of your salvation less clear and destructive? Surely not: but greater as the soul and eternity are more important, than time and the body. When---O! when! will men exercise the same common sense, and practical wisdom in laboring for the meat that endureth to eternal life! Be not deceived, then; for God cannot be mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

In the improvement of our subject we infer.

1. *That the ways of God in creation are equal.*

In all the created forms of dust, the gift of being, its continuance and its death may be ordered according to the Creator's sovereign pleasure; for no injury is done it: and from all we can judge of the nature and state of his creatures, who filleth the earth with his goodness, their condition is better than non-existence.

2. *In the providential government of the world God's ways are equal.* No injury can be done his creatures in the adversities and calamities that men by sin bring upon themselves; or those which providence brings upon them for their trial and instruction. If the mercies of God which naturally tend to lead men to repentance, be misimproved, the fault is not in the giver. Shall the sun be darkened because it lights the wicked to iniquity? Is the fire useless because mad-men burn themselves? Is the sun no blessing to the world because it lights some men to their voluntary destruction? Are bread and wine no blessing because the luxurious and intemperate thereby destroy themselves? Is God not good because men abuse his goodness?

3. *God's ways of mercy are equal.* The blessings and gift of eternal life are equally and freely offered

to all who are under the gospel : and offered -- *on the same condition of acceptance* -- to the high and the low ... the rich and the poor ... the unlearned and the wise ... the least and the greatest sinners. *Whosoever will*, let him come and take the water of life freely. All the world is guilty before God, and under just sentence of wrath. Mercy is his free gift. Justly may he have more abundant mercy on whom he will, for reasons unknown to us.

4. *How boundless are the patience and long suffering of God.* His ways are not like our ways : but far above them as the heaven is above the earth.

5. *Our subject leaves the sinner without any ground of complaint.* He chooses his own course, and is justly accountable for the consequences. " O ! Israel thou hast destroyed thyself."

6. *How adorable is the supreme God, only wise ! How consummate that wisdom which comprehends at one single view, all present, all past, and all possible things.*

This unerring wisdom presides over the movements of universal nature ... informs every intelligent creature ... supports and controuls the animated, and material worlds, by his almighty word.

O ! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the power of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways, past finding out.

7. *How safe, how happy is the whole creation under the direction of his wisdom, and the protection of almighty power.* The mighty whole is made up of all its connected parts ; every part then will claim divine attention. All his works, *from archangels to animated atoms*, and from the beginning of the creation are known to him. Not one of them, for one moment, is forgotten before God. All creatures wait upon him and receive their portion in due season. God is light and shines with beneficence on all. His tender mercies are over all his works, and like the beams of his sun, or the dew of his heaven, ready to descend on











